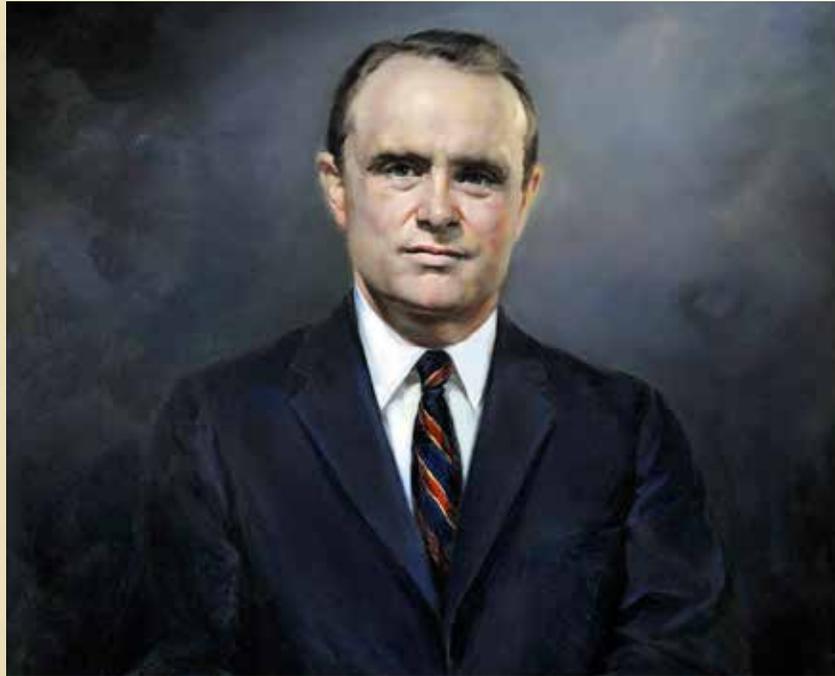


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CIVIL WAR TO CIVIL RIGHTS: GOV. EDWARD T. BREATHITT



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HOPKINSVILLE — Gov. Edward “Ned” Breathitt was born in Hopkinsville, Ky., Nov. 26, 1924. A graduate of the University of Kentucky and a World War II veteran, Breathitt was governor of the Commonwealth from 1963 to 1967.

Breathitt was a Democrat and worked to improve the state’s highways, better fund the parks and education system and strengthen strip-mining regulations. At the Southern Governor’s Conference in 1964, Breathitt voted against Alabama Gov. George Wallace’s

proposed constitutional amendment to give state and local authorities sole jurisdiction over public schools. The amendment would have prevented implementation of the *Brown v. the Board of Education* (1954) decision. The Supreme Court ruled that separate but equal education facilities were unconstitutional, setting into motion the dismantling of Jim Crow schools and eventually, segregation in all public accommodations.

Breathitt’s opposition helped scuttle the amendment, as passing it required unanimous approval. His crowning achievement was the passage of the 1966 Kentucky Civil Rights Act, which banned discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, color and religion in public accommodations and employment. When Breathitt signed the bill into law, Kentucky became the first Southern state to pass an integration statute.

The Kentucky Historical Society (KHS) links Kentuckians with their past via archival collections that document people from every walk of life, reaching back to 1509. Letters, diaries, oral histories and photographs, as well as the first and second Kentucky Constitutions, are included. Find these and other KHS collections online at khscatalog.kyvl.org

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